THE CHUNDUR CARNAGE

AUGUST 6, 1991

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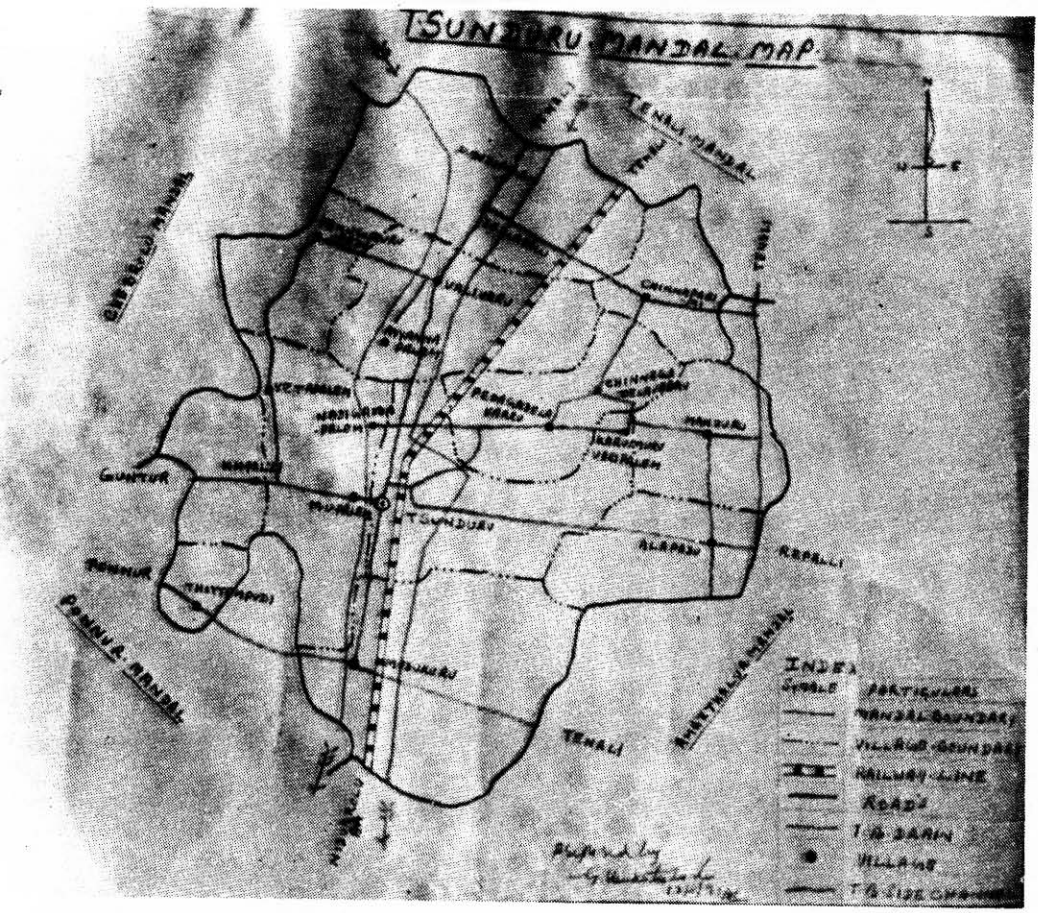

THE CHUNDUR CARNAGE – AN APCLC PUBLICATION

COVER PICTURE: DALITS OBSERVE PROTEST ON AUGUST 15

Copies : 1,000

First Published : August 1991

Photos courtesy: Indian Express

Contribution Rs:2/-

For Copies :

S.S.C. Bose
Ramanadham Chamber of Law,
Peddibotlavaari Veedhi,
Governerpet,
Vijayawada - 520 002.

FROM KARAMCHEDU TO CHUNDUR

The Chundur Massacre has caught the attention of whole country for, it is an event without parallel in the recent history of Andhra Pradesh. Indeed, after the kilvenmani this is perhaps the biggest killing of dalits, at least in South India. A detailed report of the massacre is given below. Here we would like to draw attention to some important diversions of the increasingly common phenomenon of 'atrocities on dalits'.

The Indian Constitution has formally abolished untouchability in Article 17, Articles 15 and 16 guarantee, as a fundamental right, non-discrimination on Caste grounds in certain specific matters such as education, employment and access to natural resources or public facilities. There is perhaps no parallel to these Articles in the Bills of Rights proclaimed by any other country's constitution. But then there is no parallel in the social history of any other country to the abominable caste system that prevails in India.

The protection of Civil Rights Act later laid down punishments for the specific offences arising from the practice of untouchability. And the commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been compiling regular reports concerning the practice of untouchability in the country.

However, as time passed and as the country was set on the path of a certain distorted form of development, not only has untouchability not died out, but a new dimension which we today describe as 'atrocities on dalits', emerged at end of the second decade of independance. It is not that atrocities such as mass assault, arson, murder and rape never took place earlier, but the occurance of these atrocities on a large and vicious scale is certainly a relatively recent social phenomenon. So that, not satisfied with Articles 15, 16 and 17 and the PCR Act the parliament has felt compelled to enact a brand new legislation aimed specifically at preventing these atrocities, namely The Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989. Reading the provisions of the Act, one gets a clear profile of one major dimension of the recent history of rural India. No legislator would ever dream of the unspeakable offences enumerated in that Act, were it not true that they are perpetrated day in and day out and reported in the press.

It is not necessary to go very deep into the economic and political causes of this phenomenon. It is enough to note what is most important from the Human-Rights point of view. So long as the dalits were content to bemoan their fate but accept their lot, they were tolerated by the upper castes. They were regarded as lowly degraded creatures but at least they were not subjected to mass attacks of arson, murder and rape. But once the dalits started raising their heads and asserting their dignity, they

became intolerable to the upper castes. Today a sizeable section has developed among the dalits which refuses to regard its existence as something decreed by fate, but understands and analyses it as a product of historical injustice. Dalits today are demanding land, economic betterment, education, employment and above all social equality and dignity. It is this assertion that is found intolerable by the upper castes, including those who are themselves not very rich or powerful.

This change is taking place within a larger context of political degeneration and economic crisis. Given a democratic polity and a healthy economy perhaps the self-assertion of dalits, however unpalatable it may be to upper castes, could have been accomodated relatively smoothly,. Indeed, such an accomodation would be proof of a healthy democratic society. But, what we have today is a thoroughly crisis ridden economy and a polity in which whatever democracy we ever had is being replaced by gang warfare.

This combination of economic crisis of various forms, political gangsterism and upper caste intolerance of dalit self assertion can be seen behind every incident of 'atrocities on dalits'. It can also be seen in the ugly agitation against the Mandal Commission that broke out like a rash all over the country.

In Andhra Pradesh, the killing of Kotesu, in Kanchikacherla in Krishna district two decades ago is usually regarded as the beginning of this phenomenon. But the recent spate of atrocities against dalits began with the Karamchedu killing of 17th July 1985. On that day, six dalit youth were murdered and three girls were raped by an armed gang of youth belonging to the Kamma caste. That caste was disproportionately represented in the Cabinet of N.T. Rama Rao, who was then the Chief Minister and Karamchedu was actually the village of his daughter's in-laws. It is certainly no coincidence that in Chundur it was the Reddys who perpetrated the massacre and that in the present Cabinet of Janardhan Reddy more than fifty per cent of the ministers are Reddys.

We give as annexure to the report on Chundur the list of all incidents of murder or arson against dalits by upper caste persons from the Karamchedu massacre onwards. The list is not necessarily exhaustive because a large number of incidents pass off as individual murders without catching the attention of public as a case of 'atrocities on dalits'. This is particularly true of cases where the murderers succeed in coopting or hiring some dalits to do their dirty job for them.

We will briefly mention some facts concerning these incidents. One, in almost all the cases the assailants were not just some persons belonging to upper castes but were persons with close kinship or political ties with those in power. Two, in almost all the cases, there was prior

history of tension between the assailants and the dalits and police were well aware of that fact but failed to prevent the assault. Indeed, as in Chundur, in many cases the police were present at the spot but did nothing to prevent the assault. The dalits today have reached a stage where they complain that the presence of police in a tension ridden village is actually bad for them, for while the presence of police is an inhibiting factor for the retaliatory instincts of dalits, it does not in any way inhibit the upper castes. They today feel that if the police are not present they can atleast have a straight and honest fight. Whenever a village has a long history of tension and conflict one observes that the police repeatedly arrest and charge the dalits but take very lenient action against the upper castes, which has a debilitating and demoralising impact on the spirit of dalits. Three, subsequent to the assault the action of the police has been equally lethargic. It can be said without any exaggeration that the police have never made any serious attempt to apprehend the principal assailants. Even in Chundur, though more than seventy persons are said to have been arrested till now, the principal assailants are still at large. And this inspite of the fact that the SP of Guntur Sri Meena and the DIG Guntur Sri Aravinda Rao are persons whose reputation for ruthless policing of naxalite affected areas where they served earlier is notorious. In all the cases, what has happened is that the assailants themselves surrendered after a month or two of evasion.

Four, the process of Justice has been equally tardy. The Karamchedu massacre took place six years ago. It is believed by legal experts who are handling the case that there is enough evidence to convict at least twenty of the accused, and it is evident that if the trial had been completed and the sentence executed by now that would have had an inhibiting affect on the murderers of Chundur. But after six years the Karamchedu trial is yet to start. In cases where politically powerful persons are directly involved in the crime, as for instance, Congress-I strongman Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy in the Pulivendula arson case, Gorle Sriramulu Naidu in the Jeerupalem arson case, G. Narayana Reddy in the Ambaripet murder case or TDP strongman Karanam Balaramakrishna Murthy in the Timmasamudram arson and assault case, not even the formality of filing a case is observed by the police.

A symptomatic illustration of the government's attitude in this matter is the fate of the SC and ST (prevention of atrocities) Act referred to above. This legislation was enacted two years ago but not a single major case of atrocities on dalits has been brought under it till now. The Act stipulates that the state government should set up special courts and appoint special sessions judges, at least one in each district to try offences under this Act. Not a single special court has been set up till now.

When a demand was raised for a special court after the Chundur massacre the Chief Minister graciously announced that he would set up three special courts for the three regions of the State, whereas the Act stipulates the setting up of 23 special courts, one in each district. When this is the attitude adopted by the government towards an Act which was specifically meant for offences of this kind, and contains stringent and special measures for tackling them effectively, there is small wonder that the perpetrators of the atrocities have little to fear from the law.

Lastly, we must mention the growing consolidation of upper caste arrogance that is a distinctly post - Chundur phenomenon. At the time of Karamchedu massacre there was no attempt by the upper castes to justify the killings. This time round they are shamelessly and openly defending the Chundur massacre and proclaiming that more Chundurs will take place hereafter. An organisation by the name, Sarva Janabyudaya Porata Samithi has been formed (Struggle Committee for the betterment of All people) under whose banner the forward castes are rallying their forces and organising demonstrations, meetings, bandhs etc in protest against the self assertion of the dalits and what they describe as the partiality of the government. Their slogans are 'Long live unity of forward castes', 'we will hang Katti Padma Rao' (he is a leader of the Dalit Mahasabha), 'those who beg every morsel should not be arrogant' etc; This casteist consolidation is no doubt a fallout of the anti-mandal agitation wherein for the first time after independence we saw forward castes mobilising explicitly in the name of caste and being hailed as fighters for justice by the press and intelligentsia. The same faces that were seen in the anti-Mandal rallies are visible in the post - Chundur mobilisation of forward castes. It has already resulted in an assault by forward caste students on a predominantly Scheduled Caste college in Guntur in which they set fire to the books, certificates and clothes of the dalit students in the presence of the district superintendent of police. In REC, Warangal, the police and the authorities were happy spectators to the bonfire lit by anti-mandal agitators in the rooms belonging to backward class students.

Such assaults are likely to be on the increase. Where the self assertion of the dalits is a widespread and mass phenomenon as in the Krishna and Godavari basin of Coastal Andhra, these assaults are likely to take the form of mass attacks as in Karamchedu and Chundur. The tinder is dry and waiting to be lit in not one or two but dozens of villages in Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, West Godavari and East Godavari districts. Where the self assertion of dalits, as for instance in the Rayalaseema districts and in Southern Telangana, is narrower and confined to a few courageous individuals, the assault is likely to take the

form of individual killings that do not catch media attention. For instance, in the North Coastal district of Vizianagaram, four tribals of one family were killed at Chinakada in 1989 and four tribals and a harijan were killed at Kaspagadabavalasa in 1990 without catching anybody's attention. In Medak, Mahbubnagar, Rangareddy and Nizamabad districts it is quite common for rebellious dalits to be branded as sorcerers and then killed, which obscures the matter even further.

This in brief is the situation prevalent in Andhra Pradesh. In substance it is no different from the situation in any other State. The immediate need is a strong and sustained democratic movement which will help to protect the rising self assertion of dalits from the intolerance of upper castes. Such a movement cannot be left to the dalits alone, but must be joined by all the democratic forces. In this matter, Andhra Pradesh is certainly better placed than most States in the country. There is not only a rising tide of awareness and organisation among the dalits but also a strong and vibrant democratic movement that is sensitive to the issue. It is this factor that gives cause for hope in an otherwise bleak situation.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE :

What is the socio-economic situation in Chundur, which witnessed the attack by upper castes in which eight dalits were killed and at least nine others are reported missing ?

Chundur, the mandal headquarters is located about 15 km from Tenali town on the Tenali-Madras railway line. With an area of 18 square miles, Chundur has a population of about 5,800 with the dalits and the upper castes in almost equal numbers.

The most dominant among the upper castes are the Reddys with nearly 800 families, who also own most of the land. There are about 225 Telaga, 25 Brahmin and about 15 Vysya families. Among the Scheduled Castes, the largest group belongs to the 'Malas' with nearly 400 families while there are about 100 'Madiga' families. There are a little over 100 families of Scheduled Tribes (Erukula and Yanadi).

Unlike in other villages, the dalits of Chundur are better educated, some of them had gained political positions and a good number of them are employed. On the other hand, members of the upper castes, particularly the Reddys and Telagas are less educated and most of the youth do odd jobs like tractor drivers or are engaged in farming.

All was well in Chundur as long as the dalits observed traditional norms in their relationship with the upper castes. Enlightened by education, the dalit youth have begun challenging the rights 'attained by birth' of the other castes. This was the cause of the constant friction between the dalits and the upper castes.

For a village like Chundur, the level of literacy is high. There are

three primary schools and a high school in the village. Nearly 3,000 persons in the village know to read and write, including a good number of women, While nearly 15 dalits have done their post-graduation, there are scores of graduates and about 200 matriculates among them. But, there are few among the upper castes with such a level of education.

The education naturally helped the dalits to secure jobs. Nearly 300 of them work in the Railways as fitters and gangmen. Some of them are employed in the telephones department, banks and afew dalits have also become Mandal Revenue Officers.

Over a period of time, there has been a change in the life-style of the Scheduled Castes. People, who were virtual serfs till a few decades ago have now become tenant cultivators while the younger generation has acquired decent jobs. This transformation among the dalits was seen as a threat to their authority by the upper castes. They could no longer address the dalits in the customary rude manner. Public places like tea shops and cinema halls have come into common use by the upper castes and the dalits.

In fact, on several occasions, the upper castes did their best to prevent the present generation of dalits from getting educated. The dalit students were not allowed to sit for examinations on the pretext that they did not possess the requisite attendance. Attacks on colleges, where dalit students are in good number, took place on many occasions. Despite such odds, the SC youth continued their studies which gave them a new status that no longer fits in the comfortable old slot that has been so advantageous for the upper castes.

This is precisely the reason why a small incident like an educated dalit youth stretching his leg on a seat occupied by an upper caste boy in a theatre led to the social boycott of the dalits and culminated in the August 6 carnage. Following the theatre episode, dalit children were not allowed to pass through the village on their way to the school. Dalit farm hands were deprived of work and tenancies were terminated. The dalit youth were beaten up on small pretexts.

Despite their education, the dalits are economically way behind the upper castes, as most of the farm land belonged to the latter. Of the nearly 2,400 acres of cultivable land in the village, the Reddys own about 1,200 acres and the Telagas, 250 acres. The dalits own a mere 90 acres. The upper castes of the surrounding villages have about 200 acres in Chundur. The Brahmins own a little over 100 acres and the Vysyas about 65 acres.

Except for about 100 acres, which is given on tenancy to the dalits, most of the land is cultivated by the upper castes themselves. The land in this village, which is irrigated by the Krishna canal costs about Rs.

60,000 to Rs. 75,000 per acre. For the lands given on tenancy, the dalits pay Rs. 3,000 per acre to the landlords in advance. The entire produce is then taken by the tenant. Following the incident in the cinema theatre, the upper castes terminated the tenancies abruptly and in some cases did not even pay back the amount they collected from the dalits.

Unlike in Karamchedu, there are few landlords in Chundur who own large areas of land. According to the records available with the Mandal Revenue office, more than 1,100 persons (of whom 68 are SCs and and 12 are STs) own less than a hectare of land. About 250 of the villagers own land ranging between one and two hectares while those possessing more than two hectares number around 85.

The Chundur dalits point out that the upper castes of this village gained good support from the Reddys and Telagas of the surrounding Modukuru and Valiveru villages. While in Modukuru, the Reddys own nearly 2,600 of the total 3,300 acres of cultivable land, in the case of Valiveru, the Reddys possess as many as 2,300 acres of the total of 3,000 acres in the village. In fact, several upper caste men belonging to these two villages were named among the culprits involved in the brutal killings of dalits on August 6.

The situation in Chundur is also different from the other villages in the sense that fewer dalits depend on the local upper caste people for their livelihood. While a good number of them are employed, as has been already pointed out, a few are small peasants and even the farm labour do not depend on the mercy of the upper castes. Due to the mobility facilitated by the public transport system and trains, they go even to far off places like Chirala and Narsaraopet to work as farm hands. In fact, the dalits resorted to such a migration when they were subjected to social boycott by the upper castes.

Despite their economic backwardness, the dalits could emerge as a successful group politically. The Chundur Mandal Praja Parishad president is a dalit belonging to the Congress-I. Both the dalits and the upper castes of Chundur have been aligned with the Congress-I politically. Dalits were also elected as mandal presidents of Amrutalur, Ponnur, Nagaram and Intur, all of them reserved constituencies.

It is this social emancipation among the dalits that turned as an eyesore to the upper castes who felt that their dominance in the village was slowly being eroded. That the dalits remained independent and assertive even after they were subjected to social boycott only made the upper castes more intolerant towards them. As one dalit woman put it, the reasoning of the upper castes in attacking the dalits is that "they wanted to teach us a lesson. That we can never live as decent people and should be servile to them for ever".

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS :

The upper castes gave vent to their seething anger over the self assertion of dalits following an incident at the theatre on July 7. On that day, a dalit youth, Ravi, a post - graduate student at Nagpur, rested his foot on the seat in front which was occupied by an upper caste boy Kurri Srinivasa Reddy. A minor altercation ensued between Ravi and Srinivasa Reddy when the latter abused the dalit youth in the name of his caste.

Soon after this incident Ravi left for Ongole. The next day, Ravi's father Bhaskar Rao, working as a teacher in Munnangivaripalem hamlet, skirting Chundur, was forcibly taken away by a group of Reddys and subjected to brutal torture forcing him to reveal the whereabouts of his son. The upper castes succeeded in eliciting information from Bhaskar Rao that Ravi would return to Chundur that evening by the Madras-Howrah express.

Ravi was warned of the impending attack by the upper castes by some dalit youth the moment he alighted from the train. Sensing danger to his life, Ravi fled to the neighbouring Pedagajulapalli village and took shelter in the house of a dalit. The upper castes managed to trace him down after falsely alleging that Ravi had fled Chundur after stealing some gold ornaments from a house. Ravi was mercilessly beaten in Pedagajulapalli itself and later brought to Chundur in a tractor. He was kept in the Mandal Revenue Office for a few hours when he was again beaten up and forced to consume liquor. Later, he was admitted to the Government Hospital in Tenali with bleeding injuries. While the police took no action against the upper castes, the latter implicated Ravi in a case of theft. The incident occured at the instance of Chundur sarpanch Modugula Sambi Reddy, who was also the principal assailant in the subsequent killing of dalits, on August 6.

Fearing further reprisals from the upper castes, neither Ravi nor his father lodged complaint with the police. This was resented by the dalits who imposed a fine of Rs. 25 on Bhaskar Rao for submitting to the upper castes.

On July 9, the Reddys and Telagas formed into a committee and decided to enforce a social boycott of the dalits (Malas). The committee was again headed by the village sarpanch. Since then, the dalits were not allowed to work in the fields of upper castes nor were they permitted to enter the upper caste locality. Land tenancies of the dalits were cancelled.

The social boycott of the dalits led to tension and at this stage section 144 was promulgated in the village. While the upper castes engaged outside labour to work in their fields, the dalits left to places like Tenali and Ponnur in search of work. A 50-strong police picket headed

by Tenali Rural Circle Inspector Saibabu was posted in the village since then.

On the night of July 12, the upper castes of the village, supported by the Reddy's of Modukur, Dindipalem and Valiveru villages tried to attack the dalit quarters in Chundur. The dalits too were prepared to counter any attack. However, the police intervened and lathi-charged both the groups to disperse them. They even opened fire in the air. A constable was reportedly injured when the upper caste men hurled soda bottles at the police party.

The next day, Circle Inspector Saibabu summoned the dalits on the pretext of forming a peace committee in the village. The police then arrested 18 persons from among the upper castes and an equal number of dalits and registered cases against them. Subsequently, the police arrested eight more Reddys and two dalits. All of them were released on conditional bail on July 16. As the village remained incident free for the next few days, the police lifted the prohibitory orders on July 29.

Again on August 4, a dalit youth, Rajababu, was attacked by the Reddys while he was reading a newspaper in a tea shop. Rajababu suffered a minor injury in the attack. While the police took no action against the culprits, a case was registered against Rajababu following a complaint lodged by the upper castes that he had harassed their girls. The dalits sought to retaliate but were persuaded against doing so by Chundur Sub-Inspector Srinivas, a person in whom the dalits had confidence.

The next day, word was sent to Yakob, a dalit fair price shop dealer, that the Mandal Revenue Officer had summoned him. Even as he was proceeding towards the MRO office, in the upper caste locality, he was attacked by the Reddys who stabbed him. The SI came to the rescue of Yakob and took him to hospital immediately. The same night additional forces were rushed to Chundur even as prohibitory orders were re-imposed in the village.

THE FINAL ASSAULT :

And then came the final assault on the dalits on the morning of August 6. The ghastly incident was pre-planned and well executed by the upper castes with the clear connivance of the police officials present in the village. The complicity of the police is obvious from the fact that the carnage took place when prohibitory orders were in force and the whole village was tense for the past one month.

One version is that a few dalit youth attacked and inflicted minor injuries on some Reddys who were working in their fields on the morning of August 6. However, this was blown out of proportion by the upper caste people who spread the falsity that three Reddy men were hacked to

death by the dalits. The upper castes of Chundur reportedly contacted the Reddys of Modukur over telephone and asked them to be prepared for attacking the dalits. By then, the upper caste men of nearby Valiveru, Manchala, Munnangivaripalam and Vellaturu villages ware also mobilised for an assault on dalits.

Around 11am, Saibabu and Vemuru Sub-Inspector Sheik Madarvali came to the dalit quarters and asked them to flee as CRPF men from Mangalagiri might raid the village anytime to pick them up following a complaint lodged by the upper castes. When the dalits were hesitant to leave the village, the police virtually chased them away. However, all the dalit women stayed back.

The dalits, unaware that they were virtually walking into a death trap began fleeing into the fields only to be chased by the upper caste men from all corners of the village. The marauders, who came in tractors and scooters and were well armed first caught the fleeing dalits, beat them with iron rods and killed them with daggers and axes. They then leisurely packed some of the bodies in gunny bags and dumped them in the tungabhadra drain and the irrigation canal. The bodies of three dalits, who were killed when they were hiding in a jasmine grove abutting the drain, were left there itself.

Several dalit women pointed out that policemen were present in the tractors which carried the upper caste men as they went about chasing the dalits. Scores of policemen, who remained in dalit quarters after forcing the men to flee remained deaf to the cries of the dalits being massacred by the upper caste mob.

As 60-year old Sampurna recalls.. "On hearing the cries of our men folk from the nearby jasmine grove, I pleaded with the policemen to protect them from the Reddys. But the police brushed aside my request saying that our men were not being attacked by anyone but were only singing songs while working in the fields." when the old woman persisted with her plea, a policeman shot back saying "what is there with you, except ash. If we support the Reddys, we get bundles." And as the wife of one of the victims put it later "but for the police, our men would have stayed back in the village and resisted any attempt to attack them. It is the police who killed our people", she said sobbing.

In fact, most of the dalit men had gone to Tenali that morning to call on Yakob at the government hospital. Only about 40 to 50 of them were present in the village when the police raided the dalit quarter and forced them to flee.

Though the dalit women apprehended danger to the lives of their men they could not guage themagnitud of the attack till some of the survivors returned to the villagee late in the night and narrated how the

upper caste people went about killing the fleeing dalits

The brutality of the upper castes is well explained by 18-year old Dayari Dhanraj, who narrowly escaped death. "After the police asked us to flee i and a few others ran towards the railway tracks. We rested there for a few minutes but took to our heels again after we saw the Reddys approaching us. We ran for about 4Km. towards the fields belonging to the Reddys of Modukuru. We did not know that the Reddys of Modukur were waiting for us. There, they managed to catch hold of Mandru Ramesh and Devarapalli Jayaraj. Even as I was fleeing, I saw both of them being hacked to death in full public view".

After he ran for another km, Dhanraj was caught by another group of Reddy men. He was beaten with rods and sticks and his leg was twisted to prevent him from escaping. Dhanraj would have been killed the moment he was caught had he not been kept in a Macabare fashion as a 'prey' for a handicapped upper caste person, Mallikarjunareddy, who wanted to have the pleasure of killing atleast one dalit personnaly. Even as Dhanraj was writhing in pain, the upper caste mob removed at least a bottles of bloodl from him with the help of a syringe and left him in the fields. They then left for Chundur by vehicles to bring Mallikarjuna Reddy for carrying out the 'final operation'. Dhanraj, however, managed to jump into the canal and swam towards Alapadu where some dalit women rescued him. Late in the night, he was dressed up as a female and brought to Chundur railway station. He was later taken to Tenali government hospital and admitted there.

Besides Dhanraj, two others-Borugadda Sambaiah (50) and ponthagani Jakraiah (52) were also injured in the attack. Jakraiah and two others were fleeing from the village when the old man was attacked by the Reddy youth. "As were moving away from the village we saw an RTC bus approaching. But, we did not know that it carried our enemies. Perched atop were nearly 15 people armed with axes, knives, and iron rods. On seeing us, they stopped the bus and got down. I was too old to run while the other two managed to escape. The assailants beat me to pulp and left me in the middle of the road to fend for myself", Jakraiah recalled.

Forty - year old Ruben, who had recently purchased half an acre of land was working in his field along with Jaladi Imaneul, Jaladi Mathaiah, brothers and Mallela, Subba Rao when they saw their fellow dalits running away from the village. While Ruben swam across the Tungabhadra drain and ran away, Imaneul, Mathaih and Subba Rao hid themselves in the Jasmine groves. An upper caste man, who noticed this, informed the marauders who were moving about in vehicles. Within no time, they traced the three dalits in the groves and tortured them to death.

Imanuel was stabbed all over the body and his ear was cut off. There was a deep gash on the neck. One of the hands of Subba Rao was chopped off by the assailants before he was killed. In fact, the bodies of Imaneul, Mathaiah and Subba Rao were the first to be traced by the dalits. That was on August 7. Till then, the police officers denied that any major incident took place in Chundur the previous day. Meanwhile, the dalits continued the search for bodies as several men had not returned back. On August 8, five more bodies were recovered in the drain and the irrigation canal. The body of Angalakuduru Rajamohan stutted in a gunny bag, was found in the drain. A little distance away, the body of Jaladi Isaac, also stuffed in a gunny sack, was found in the canal. While the bodies of Sunkuru Samson and Devarapalli Jayaraj were fished out from the irrigation canal near the Intur locks, about 10km from Chundur, the body of Mandru Ramesh was found in a branch canal on the Modukur-Alapadu road.

All the eight bodies were traced by the dalits themselves and there was no assistance from the police, though they were present in large numbers. According to 23-year old Kishore, who conducted the search for bodies along with a few others, they were told by fishermen near Karlapalem, about 25km from Chundur, that five bodies were noticed on the evening of August 8 in the canal. The fishermen, however, feared that the bodies could have been washed away into the sea.

By August 7 itself, most of the dalits, including women, fled Chundur and took refuge in the salvation army church at Itanagar in Tenali. It was here that 35-year old Parisudha Rao died of a heart attack after seeing the body of his younger brother, Mandru Ramesh, in the Tenali government hospital.

Four days later, the dalit victims returned back to Chundur after they decided to carry out their struggle by staying on in the village itself. Since then, the dalits have held protest meetings and observed mass hunger strikes demanding the arrest of all those culprits involved in the attack on them. They have also decided not to accept any kind of assistance offered by the government till their demands were met.

FINDINGS :

1. The upper castes could not carry out such a brutal attack on the dalits without the active connivance of the police forcel. By chasing the dalits away from the village, the police made them easy targets for the upper castes. Though the killing spree went on for nearly three to four hours, none of the policemen made any effort to prevent the massacre. On the other hand, the dalits alleged that some policemen accompanied the marauding upper caste men in the tractors.
2. Though the incident took place in broad daylight, the police did

their best to hush up the killings till the next day and made no effort to apprehend the culprits. The police also did not make any effort to search for the bodies. The dalits themselves traced the bodies and handed them over to the police for conducting the inquest.

3. In all the incidents that took place during the month that preceded the killings, the police never tried to take action against the upper castes. Even when the dalits were attacked by the upper castes, cases were registered against the dalits.

DEMANDS :

1. The government should constitute an exclusive sessions court at Tenali under the provisions of SC & ST (Prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989.
2. All the police officers - the DSP of Tenali, the Circle Inspector of Tenali Rural and the five Sub-Inspectors who were present at Chundur when the incident took place should be arrested and tried for abetment of crime after their summary dismissal.
3. The police should take steps to arrest the principal assailants in the murder of dalits. Or else, their property should be attached as promised by the Chief Minister.
4. Every effort should be made to discover the whereabouts of the nine missing dalits.

LIST OF THE DEAD :

1. Jaladi Mathaiah (40)
2. Jaladi Imaneul (38)
3. Mallela Subba Rao (35)
4. Jaladi Isaac (25)
5. Angalakuduru Rajamohan (25)
6. Sunkuru Samson (28)
7. Devarapalli Jayaraj (30
8. Mandru Ramesh (21)
9. Mandru Parisudha Rao (35) (died of heart attack)

LIST OF THE INJURED :

1. Borugadda Sambaiah (50)
2. Ponthagani Jakraiah (52)
3. Dayari Dhanraj (25)

THE MISSING PERSONS :

1. Jaladi Madhusudhan (35)
2. Jaladi Prakash Rao (30
3. Tappeta Babu (24)
4. Perikala Devadas (30)
5. Kalahasti Chinna (22)

6. Aluri Dibbaiah (35)
7. Ch. atragadda Basavaiah (30)

and two others.

Major incidents of attacks on Dalits in A.P. In recent years

No.	Place of occurence	Date of Occurence	Nature of incident
1.	Karamchedu (Prakasam district)	17 July 1985	Six dalit youth were murdered & three women raped in a mass assault by forward castes.
2.	Hasnapur (Adilabad district)	13 June 1985 & 18 July 1985	Landlords closely related to the M.L.A., Adilabad murdered two youth of the dhobi and barber castes respectively on these two dates.
3.	Avdhatpur (Medak district)	17 Jan 1986	Landlords belonging to TDP set fire to 30 houses of dalits
4.	Neerukonda (Guntur district)	15 July 1987	One elderly dalit was killed in a mass assault by forward caste men.
5.	Gudiada (Vizianagaram district)	20 July 1987	One dalit was killed in a mass assault by forward caste men.
6.	Dontali (Nellore district)	27 August 1987	One person of a backward caste was killed in an assault by a gang of forward caste men.
7.	Chirala (Prakasam district)	13 August 1987	A principal witness in the Karamchedu murder case done to death by the Karamchedu killers.
8.	Bandilapalli	27 Nov. 1987	

			Four dalits beaten and stabbed to death in an assault by a group of forward caste men.
9.	Kodavatikallu (Krishna district)	2 Feb 1988	Dalit labourer murdered by a land lord.
10.	Beernakallu (Nellore district)	19 Jan 1989	a dalit, upasarpanch of the village, killed by TDP landlords.
11.	Gokarajupalli (Krishna district)	16 jan 1989	A dalit labourer killed by landlords.
12.	Tangutur (Prakasam district)	3 March 1989	A dalit woman raped and burnt to death by a forward caste TDP strong man.
13.	Jabbargudem (Ranga Reddy district)	27 April 1989	One dalit killed in a mass assallt by henchmen of TDP landlord.
14.	Pippara (West godavari district)	4 June 1989	One dalit killed in a mass assault by forward cste men led by village upasarpanch.
15.	Chinakada (Vizianagaram district)	31 July 1989	Four tribals of one familykilled by henchmen of a liquor contractor.
16.	Pulivendula (Cuddapah district	16 Feb 1990	More than 150 houses of a scheduled tribe set on fire and destroyed by amobled by Cong (I) sarpanch.
17.	Kanchikacherla (Krishna district)	19 March 1990	Dalit farm servant killed by youth of the landlord's family.
18.	Jeerupalem	21 May 1990	About 180 houses of fish

	(Srikakulam district)		ing people set on fire at the behest of Cong(I) landlord.
19.	Gutlapadu (West Godavari district)	19 May 1990	Two dalits killed in a mass assault by forward caste men
20.	Reddypalli (Rangareddy district)	12 Feb 1990	A tribal peasant burnt alive by men of a landlord close to local M.L.A.
21.	Kothapulavandlapalli (Anantapur district)	6 June 1990	A dalit burnt alive by forward caste men.
22.	Kaspa Gadabavalasa (Vizianagaram district)	22 Nov. 1990	Four tribals & a harijan killed in a mass assault by for ward caste men.
23.	Chillakallu (Krishna District)	28 Nov 1990	A dalit SI of police shot himself dead due to casteist harrassment of CI.
24.	Moodurallapalli (Kurnool district)	18 March 1991	A dalit labourer beaten and stabbed to death by a mob of forward caste men.
25.	Timmasamudram (Prakasam district)	Jan 1991	Dalits driven out of the village by an attack of for ward caste men owing allegiance to a TDP leader.
26.	Chundur (Gunture district)	6 August 1991	Atleast 8 and upto 20 dalits killed in a mass assault by forward caste men of six villages.
27.	Gokarajupalli (Krishna district)	3 August 1991	Dalit labourer killed by for ward castes.

Notes :

(1) This List does not include cases of rape of dalit women bymen of forward castes. That is perhaps the most common form of assault on dalits, but it is the least commonly reported.

(2) In the last column, where the caste of the victim is not specified, it must be understood as scheduled caste, i.e., Mala/madiga.

(3) The list, of course, gives only those cases that have caught public attention.

HONDUR UNDER SE

BODY OF A DALIT FOUND IN THE FIELDS.